

William Call

Paired Qualities

They exist as they are perceived

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Most Advanced?

We moderns are proud of our achievements. When we compare our technology with that of our ancestors, we see how far we have come. Two hundred years ago our forbears traveled in wagons, used open fires to heat their homes, and struggled to prevent infant mortality. The Scientific Revolution was well underway and was joined by a communication, transportation, and industrial revolution. In our own time new technology in health care, safety, and nutrition have added significantly to life expectancy as well as continued activity into old age. There is, however, an aspect of our existence compared to that of our forebears that may not be tipped in our favor. If we could go back and question a great great grandparent concerning how we humans fit into a broader than this-life-only context, we would likely get a response. If, however, the tables were turned and our ancestors could come back and question us today on the same topic, a blank stare might be our only reply.

There can't of course be dramatic changes in technology without dramatic changes in culture. As a result of change the rudder that served as a guide for our forebears often seems inadequate today. While they accepted the views of established institutions, we are inclined to question them. When solving a problem they put their trust in a higher power. We tend to put ours in research, study, and trial and error.

While religion was dominant in their day, science prevails in ours. They believed God was the benevolent governor of all creation. That, however, was before the horrors of technology reaped havoc in World War I and then again in World War II. Today, while science continues to carry the bigger stick in public opinion, religion still has a role to play. Together the two claim that all of existence can be accounted for by a force, which for religion is God and for science energy. What we learn from religion and science is that both God and the universe are incomprehensible. God, according to religion, is the superintendent that oversees existence as it oc-

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curs while determining what will happen along the way. Science, disagreeing with this view, claims the material world, rather than guided by an outside force is sufficient in itself. According to science whatever happens in the material world is not because a rational being wills it but because the laws of nature determine it.

Though the validity of the claims made by religion and science is is not demonstrable and though their claims hardly take all options into account, they are nonetheless highly impactful when it comes to the question of individual identity. There is a price to be paid for the espousal of beliefs in entities that are defined as both universal and incomprehensible. It is paid as individuals attempt to find meaning as they dive into an ocean of mystery. What role is there for the individual person in an existence governed by incomprehensibility? Not knowing what governs existence we likewise don't know what it is. As an alternative we who value individuality note the difference between an existence that is believe-in and one that is perceived.

Sensory Awareness

When we look out what do we see? In our culture our focus is on objects and our interest is in their functionality. We want to know what an object does and how it does it. Qualities such as large or small, light or dark, here or there, hard or soft, or rigid or flexible, are characteristics of objects. Although we are aware of qualities that characterize objects, we often ignore them focussing instead on an object's usefulness.

A compelling reason to consider qualities is that they are relational. While objects are entities that exist separately, qualities exist in relation to each other. With our awareness of qualities comes an awareness of their relationships and how they relate to existence generally. We easily misunderstand the fundamentals of existence when our attention is on objects only. A corrective is to consider objects as they are characterized by qualities.

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We believe that objectivity and perception are at odds with each other. We cite the difference between what we perceive and what we believe is “really out there.” We tend not to take sensory perception at face value. To keep the objective and the subjective separate we bypass perception in favor of methods that avoid subjective considerations.

Nonetheless, perception provides a view of existence that takes into account the relationship of its parts. Context is what makes our existence meaningful, and context has to do with how one thing relates to another. Perception enables us to view our existence in the context of ourselves relating to the world. Perception is of entities we believe exist out there in the world. We relate to the world as we perceive it, and the world relates to us as it is perceived.

There’s a difference between a world that is perceived and one that is only believed in. When we focus on belief we fail to realize that an unperceived world has no qualities. The real world is, of course, qualitative. When the qualities that characterize the world are not perceived they don’t exist. Accordingly, because the world is qualitative, for it to exist it must be perceived.

Nonetheless, the necessary relationship of a perceiver and the world as it is perceived may seem counterintuitive because it stands in opposition to the common belief that when we die we will stop existing even as the world continues to exist without us. The latter would be true if the world were not qualitative, if it were not characterized by qualities we perceive. When we die the world can’t go on existing as before because when we “go” the world as we have perceived it goes with us!

We ignore perceived qualities, but we’re not alone. Our forebears and their forebears going back thousands of years did the same as did also the “big guns” of philosophy including the Greek philoso-

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phers Plato and Aristotle. They were aware of qualities but did not seriously inquire concerning them. In Plato's allegory of the cave he regards the realm of the constant as real as compared to the changing perceived world, which he believed was not real. He was unaware of the fundamental role that changing qualitative relationships play. Aristotle, Plato's famous pupil, speaks of "opposites," or paired qualities, but thought they were secondary as compared to the more enduring "substance" of things.

When Christianity arose it claimed that in the afterworld life is eternal or timeless, unaware that life as we know it consists of qualitative relationships that occur in time. St. Augustine, early Christianity's most famous philosopher, claimed that the quality "good" is real while the quality "evil" is only an illusion. He failed to realize that the qualities *good* versus *evil* are perceived in relation to each other.

Among the scholastics of the late Middle Ages were realists and nominalists. The realists sided with Plato claiming that qualities are eternal existents in a transcendent realm. The nominalists, which included the French philosopher Peter Abelard and the English Franciscan William of Ockham, said that such qualities as "the Just," "the Good," and "the Beautiful" exist as names only, hence the label "nominalist." Abelard's and Ockham's version of nominalism acknowledges classes of like things such as beds and tables, but regards "bedness" and "tableness" as referencing concepts in the mind rather than existents in a transcendent realm. Neither the realists nor the nominalists, however, were acquainted with qualitative relationships that serve as the structural components of existence.

In the 17th century the philosopher Rene Descartes said that the universe consists of two radically different kinds of substances—the mind, characterized by the qualities *immaterial* and *thinking*, and the body, characterized by the qualities *material* and *unthink-*

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ing. That the mind and body interact is apparent but how the interaction is accomplished was a question Descartes left unanswered. It remains unanswered still today. Although we believe the body is material and the mind is immaterial and that the mind and body exist separately, we note that our existence consists of an ongoing series of mind/body interactions. The relationship of the mind and body is apparent. Without it living things couldn't perceive, move, make decisions, or perform everyday functions. The mind/body relationship is necessary not only for humans but for living things generally including insects, fishes, birds and animals.

Although the brain is regarded as the interface between the mind and the body, we have no awareness of a connecting link between the mind and the brain. That the two must be connected seems obvious. A material connector would be tangible to the touch, take up space, exist in time, and have finite boundaries. An immaterial connector wouldn't be tangible to the touch, wouldn't take up space, wouldn't exist in time, and wouldn't have finite boundaries. To connect to the mind an immaterial connector would be required. To connect to the brain a material connection is necessary. To connect the one to the other we look for an immaterial/material connector, but since there isn't one we have no idea of how the mind and brain are "connected."

We question whether what we perceive is "in here" in our mind or "out there" in the world. When we look at something, is the image of what we see material out there or immaterial in here? We believe that out there are actual material objects such as rocks, trees, fields, and fences that exist when we are not perceiving them. We believe we perceive images of these objects. Is an image we see both in here and out there? If so, why don't we see two images? If what we see is out there only, a copy of it would not be retained in our mind. If alternatively what we see is in here only, how does it relate to the world out there? Then there's the question of seeing a material image in an immaterial mind. To address these questions

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we must first come to an understanding of the difference between an entity that is material and one that is immaterial.

Changing Qualities

From change comes difference. When the quality *cold* changes it becomes the quality *hot* because the quality *hot* is different than the quality *cold*. Similarly, when the quality *hot* changes it becomes the quality *cold* because the quality *cold* is different than the quality *hot*.

The quality *cold* is changing. It isn't absolutely cold because it is becoming the quality *hot*. The quality *hot* is changing. It isn't absolutely hot because it is changing to become the quality *cold*.

Because we perceive the quality *cold* becoming the quality *hot* and the quality *hot* becoming the quality *cold*, we perceive the two qualities in relation to each other. As the result of change, water is sometimes hot and sometimes cold, and yet, if something about water didn't remain constant, we would regard hot water and cold water as two different substances rather than as one substance with two different qualities. But what is the substance that remains constant as qualities change? We don't know because our perception is of qualities only. The substance of an entity isn't a quality, isn't changing, and therefore isn't perceptible to the senses. By contrast, that which characterizes a substance is a quality, is changing, and is therefore perceptible to the senses.

Our sensory organs are designed to detect qualitative changes. We perceive qualities as they change. If they did not change there would be nothing for our senses to detect and therefore nothing for us to perceive. When we refer to a change, our reference is to changing qualities that we perceive. When a quality changes it becomes different than it was before the change. Because the after is different than the before, it is the contrary of the before just as the before is the contrary of the after. Contraries are different although

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to be different they must be comparable to something that is the same. The qualities *hot* versus *cold* are different. The quality *warm/cool* is the same.

We are not able to perceive the qualities *same* versus *different* with our senses. We can't see, hear, touch, taste, or smell either the quality *same* or the quality *different*. We are, however, equipped with a cognitive faculty that enables us to consider the relationship of the qualities *same* versus *different*. Change is inclusive of a before and an after. With our intellect we are able to consider the relationship of a quality before and after it changes. Our intellect indicates that a quality has changed, that a quality that has changed is different, and that a quality that is different is in contrast to what the quality was prior to the change.

When we perceive a quality, because the quality is changing as we perceive it, it is followed by its contrary. Our intellect enables us to consider the relationship of a quality and its contrary. Although the qualities *hot* versus *cold* are contraries, because they are the before and after of the same quality, they constitute a pair. Our intellect informs us that as contraries they are different and that as different they are two while also informing us that as members of a pair they are the same, and as the same they are one.

As a quality changes it may be regarded as two different qualities. When the quality *hot* changes we may perceive it to be the quality *cold*, just as when the quality *cold* changes we may perceive it to be the quality *hot*. With our intellect we are able to compare the two qualities and determine that they are different. If, however, the quality *hot* changes to become cooler, and the quality *cold* changes to become warmer, at some point our intellect after comparing the two may indicate that these two different qualities *hot* versus *cold* have become the same quality *warm/cool*. Because paired qualities change, our intellect may inform us that they are two qualities

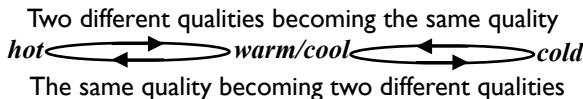
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separated by difference or that they are one quality united by sameness.

Although paired qualities may be judged to be either two separate qualities or one united quality, because they are changing they are neither absolutely separate nor absolutely united. Water that is changing can be perceived to be neither absolutely hot nor absolutely cold. Neither the difference between nor the sameness of the qualities *hot* versus *cold* is absolute because as the qualities change their relationship also changes. Because the changing qualities *cold* versus *hot* are never absolutely different or absolutely the same, there are no entities characterized by them that are absolutely cold or absolutely hot.

Qualities that characterize an entity are perceived in paired relationships. They are paired in relation to the qualities *same* versus *different*. If the qualities *hot* and *cold* were absolute they would be either absolutely the same or absolutely different. If they were absolutely different they would be two absolutely separate qualities. If they were absolutely the same they would be one absolutely united quality. But because they are changing they are neither absolutely different qualities nor absolutely the same quality but are instead either two different qualities becoming the same quality or the same quality becoming two different qualities. Figure 1 below indicates the relationship of the changing qualities *hot* versus *cold* and the corresponding relationship of the changing qualities *same* versus *different*.

Figure 1



Paired qualities are ubiquitous. Wherever there are perceiving persons there are paired qualities. On the desk at which I work I have two monitors. One is on the left the other on the right. The quali-

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ties *right* versus *left* are paired and are perceived in relation to each other. The room where I work has a ceiling and a floor. One is characterized by the quality *up* the other by the quality *down*. Because I perceive the quality *up* in relation to the quality *down*, the two qualities are paired. Sometimes I arrive early. Sometimes I arrive late. I perceive the qualities *early* versus *late* in relation to each other. They are paired.

Constant Ideas

With our senses we perceive qualities. With our mind we conceive ideas. Prominent among the ideas we conceive are ideas of entities. The table at which I work is an entity. I conceive an idea of it in my mind as I perceive characteristics of it with my senses. The sensory qualities that I perceive are changing. The ideas of entities that I conceive are constant. While sensory qualities are perceived in opposing pairs, entities are conceived as separate standalone ideas. Changing sensory qualities are perceived “out there” in the world. Constant ideas of entities are conceived “in here” in the mind. Our conscious awareness is of both ideas of entities that are constant in here in the mind and qualities that are changing out there in the world.

The qualities we perceive are always characteristics of entities the ideas of which we conceive. We never perceive qualities that are separate from entities. When we speak of the quality *hot*, for example, we refer to something that is hot. When we refer to something, we identify it by the qualities that characterize it. We differentiate one entity from another by noting the difference in their respective qualities. The water in one container is hot. The water in another container is cold. A quality is meaningful as it characterizes an entity. An entity is meaningful as it is characterized by qualities. Entities are identifiable only as they are characterized by qualities. Qualities are perceived only as they characterize entities.

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Even though qualities are perceived out there and ideas of entities are conceived in here, because qualities are perceptible while ideas are imperceptible, we believe that entities exist out there where we perceive their qualities. When I view my table, I consider it to be out there apart from me even though I conceive the idea of it in here in my mind.

Although we never perceive qualities that are separate from entities, some qualities are perceptible while others are imperceptible. Perceptible entities are characterized by perceptible qualities while imperceptible entities are characterized by qualities that are imperceptible. When the idea of an entity is characterized by qualities that are not perceptible, we may identify it by its assumed function. Apart from its assumed function the the idea of an entity is “abstract” because it has no identifiable characteristics. To enable an abstract idea to be considered in a context it may be associated with an institutional belief system. The idea of the “universe,” for example, though it has no perceived qualities that characterize it, is nonetheless meaningful in the context of the physical sciences. Monotheistic religion provides meaning for the otherwise abstract idea of “God.” The term “zero” is meaningful in the context of mathematics. Music theory provides meaning for the term “tonality.” In each of these cases meaning isn’t determined by perceptible qualities but rather by considering the assumed functions of an entity in the context of a belief system.

Just as we are able to conceive ideas of entities so too are we able to conceive ideas of qualities. We perceive qualities out there in the world. We conceive ideas of qualities in here in our mind. The qualities we perceive are changing. The qualities we conceive are constant. Because perceived qualities are changing, we perceive them in paired relationships. Because conceived qualities are constant, we conceive them as separate from each other. A perceived quality is relative because it is perceived in relation to its partner

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quality. A conceived quality is absolute because it is conceived separately from other qualities.

A general rule concerning perceived qualities is that they are “out there,” changing, paired, and relative. A similar rule regarding conceived qualities is that they are “in here,” constant, separate, and absolute.

When we refer to the “material universe,” both the idea of the entity “universe” and the idea of the quality “material” are conceived in the mind. Similarly, a reference to “Almighty God” includes the idea of the entity “God” and the idea of the quality “Almighty.” In mathematics the “Fibonacci sequence” is a conceived idea as are also the “basics” of music theory. In none of these cases is the idea of the entity characterized by perceived qualities. In each of them the meaning of the idea of the entity is dependent on an absolute quality that is a conceived idea in here in the mind rather than a relative quality that is perceived out there in the world.

“Matter” and “Energy”

From antiquity to modernity a lot of water passed under the bridge, or did it? A comparison of fundamental cultural beliefs held in medieval times with those commonly held today reveals they are different as to subject matter but surprisingly similar as to substance.

Christians of the Middle Ages (about 500 to 1500 CE) believed in “God” as the creator of the world and that “spirit” is the animating or vital principle that sustains human life. As immaterial, constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite “God” was believed to be everywhere present though nowhere visible. Although “spirit” is undetectable, Christians believed that without it life would not be sustainable.

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While a belief in “God” and “spirit” is still maintained by some today, the standard modern belief is that “matter” and “energy” constitute the fundamentals of material existence. While “matter” is believed to be the material of which the “universe” is made, “energy” is believed to be the force that makes it move.

Although we moderns claim that everything material is made of “matter,” in everyday parlance we describe material things in terms of identifiable materials such as wood, steel, plastic, and fabric. We believe the “universe” is made of “matter,” but when referring to specific entities we say they are made of specific materials. People in the Middle Ages made a similar distinction. Although they believed that “God” created the world, they also believed that castles, cathedrals, municipal buildings, family dwellings, etc. were made by humans. Just as they didn’t believe that “God” would knock at the door, neither do we believe “matter” can be purchased online or at a store. We believe that “matter” is everywhere yet nowhere present at the same time.

“Matter” is a cultural term we use in certain cultural contexts especially those associated with science. By contrast, we avoid using it when referring to qualities we perceive with our senses. Whether “matter” is hard or soft, light or heavy, or short or long, we don’t specify because our references to it are as an abstract idea of an entity rather than as a specific substance that is characterized by perceptible qualities. People in the Middle Ages made a similar distinction when referring to “God.” Although the deity was believed to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, commonly experienced effects were attributed to commonly experienced causes.

We associate the term “energy” with the world or the “universe.” We say the stars of a galaxy and the planets of a solar system are moved by “energy,” while specific effects are the result of specific causes. Although gasoline is sold by the gallon and electricity by

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the kilowatt hour, “energy,” requires no unit of measure because it is neither bought nor sold. We speak of “energy” as if it were an entity with which we are familiar and yet have never viewed it, put it in a container, or moved it from one location to another. What does “energy” look like? We don’t know. We can neither see it nor picture it in our mind. We refer to it as an idea in our mind as opposed to something that exists in the everyday world.

We believe “energy” causes effects, but because it isn’t perceptible to the senses, the effects we perceive have no identifiable cause. We, for example, claim that gravity is a form of energy that causes objects to fall but are challenged because we perceive the effects but do not perceive the cause. Although we believe that floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes are the effects of “natural causes,” we perceive the effects but not the causes. We speak of the “kinetic energy” of a moving object. We see the object moving, but the “kinetic energy” if present is invisible. We claim an atomic explosion is a manifestation of “energy.” The explosion is visible but not the “energy.”

We can’t perceive causes because our perception is limited to qualities. A quality is an effect. As perceivers we perceive effects but do not perceive causes. Although believed to be powerful and dynamic, “energy” is not a perceptible entity characterized by qualities that exist out there in the world. It is instead an abstract idea that is conceived in here in the mind. If unaware that our perception is of effects not causes, when we see an effect we may believe it to be a cause. We may believe that a natural occurrence is a cause, failing to realize that it is the effect of a cause rather than the cause of an effect.

“God” and “spirit” are entities associated with medieval Christian belief. “Matter” and “energy” are entities associated with modern secular belief. Both sets of beliefs are founded on ideas conceived in the mind that are not characterized by qualities perceived by the

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senses. The world we inhabit consists of perceived qualities. The world we believe in consists of conceived ideas. The former makes an impression on our senses, the latter an impression in the mind.

Our forefathers believed that “spirit” is real. We believe the same concerning “heat.” We perceive the quality *hot* when we touch a hot object but can’t perceive “heat” because we can’t touch it. We nonetheless believe that “heat” is a form of “energy.” We perceive the quality *hot* with our sense of touch. We conceive the idea of the entity “heat” in our mind. We believe the perceived quality *hot* is an indicator of the presence of heat. We conversely claim that the perceived quality *cold* is an indicator of the absence of “heat.” We perceive the difference between the perceived quality *hot* and the perceived quality *cold* but do not perceive the difference between the presence or absence of “heat.”

“Heat” is believed to exist but is not believed to be a material substance. Changes in a material substance contained in a thermometer are believed to indicate changes in “heat.” While the changes in the material substance are perceptible, the changes in “heat” are not.

“Heat,” rather than an entity characterized by qualities that exists out there in the world is an idea of an entity that exists in here in the mind. The conceived idea of the entity “heat” is separate and absolute. It is characterized by the conceived idea of the quality “hot.” Neither the conceived idea of the entity nor the conceived idea of the quality is perceptible to the senses. Consequently our only awareness of them is as conceived ideas.

We perceive the qualities *hot* versus *cold* as they characterize entities. When they are not characterizing entities they are not perceptible. Claims concerning the transfer of “heat” from one object to another are not verifiable because the qualities *hot* versus *cold* are

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imperceptible except when they characterize entities and because “heat” is a conceived idea in here in the mind rather than an entity that is characterized by qualities that exist out there in the world.

Just as the qualities *hot* versus *cold* are perceptible to the senses, so too are the qualities *light* versus *dark*. Although we believe that the entity “heat” causes the quality *hot*, our perception is of the quality *hot* in relation to the quality *cold*. Similarly, although we believe that the entity “light” causes the quality *light*, our perception of the quality *light* is in relation to the quality *dark*. As a means of formulating a relationship between the entity “heat” and the perceived quality *hot* we claim that the entity is the cause and the quality is the effect. A parallel formulation regarding the perceived quality *light* is that it is the effect of the conceived idea “light.” Although we can’t perceive the entity “light” as a cause, we can perceive the quality *light* as an effect.

The claim that light is “electromagnetic radiation,” is a form of “energy,” is visible at certain “wavelengths,” and travels at a speed of 186,000 miles per second assumes it is an entity. Rather than a quality that characterizes entities, it is believed to be an entity that is characterized by qualities. Despite this belief we never perceive light as an entity but rather perceive it as a quality that characterizes entities. Where there are no entities there is no *light* because there is nothing for the quality *light* to characterize. Further, the quality *light* is perceived in relation to the quality *dark*. Just as the quality *light* characterizes entities so too does the quality *dark*. Because the qualities *light* versus *dark* are changing they are never perceived as absolute qualities. Therefore, when we perceive an entity that is characterized by the quality *light*, we also perceive that it is characterized by the quality *dark*.

The qualities *light* versus *dark* are perceptible only as characteristics of entities. Where there are no entities to characterize, neither the quality *light* nor the quality *dark* is perceived. We can’t see

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“light” or “dark” as standalone conceived qualities but can see that the sky is characterized by the quality *light* in the daytime and the quality *dark* at night. A comet is lighted as it passes though the nighttime sky. It is characterized by the quality *light* in contrast to the sky that is characterized by the quality *dark*.

Medieval culture was founded on a belief in “God” and “spirit,” modernity on a belief in “matter” and “energy.” While the objects of belief have changed, a reliance on belief is necessary in both cases. Because the entities in question are not perceptible, they are not identifiable as entities characterized by qualities perceived out there in the world but are instead ideas that are conceived in here in the mind. For believers in the middle ages faith was “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Modern believers may regard methods successfully applied as evidence of the existence of things they cannot see!

A Perceived or a Believed-in Existence?

In 1710 George Berkeley wrote:

There was an odor, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a color or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi* (they exist as they are perceived)... (George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*, Penguin Books, 1988, p. 54).

Few in our society have considered Berkeley’s claim that qualities exist as they are perceived. We don’t believe that perceived qualities are any different than qualities that are not perceived. Our experiences lead us to believe that the perception of the qualities of an entity has no bearing on the state of an entity’s existence.

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Still, however confident we might be that existence and perception are not related, we nonetheless entertain the question, “If a tree falls in a forest does it make a sound?” When does sound exist, when a tree falls or when someone hears (perceives) it? A modified version of this question is addressed in a Wikipedia article that relates a conversation between Albert Einstein and two colleagues:

While physicists and good friends Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr were equally instrumental in founding quantum mechanics, the two had very different views on what quantum mechanics said about reality. On one of many daily lunchtime walks with fellow physicist Abraham Pais, who like Einstein was a close friend and associate of Bohr, Einstein suddenly stopped, turned to Pais, and asked: 'Do you really believe that the moon only exists if you look at it?' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/If_a_tree_falls_in_a_forest)

Einstein's question reflects the widespread belief that the characteristics of an object are the same both when they are and when they are not perceived. The same belief extends to those qualities that characterize the world, which according to our belief are what they are without reference to perception.

Nonetheless, however satisfying our belief may seem, it misses an essential point. Qualities are changing as they exist. To be aware of the changes we must perceive them. When we only believe that qualities exist we don't perceive their changes and accordingly are unaware of their changing existence. Do changing qualities exist? Only after perceiving them are we able to answer the question. Changing qualities exist when they are perceived, which means that (and this is the punch line) when changing qualities are perceived they exist!

When we hear music we perceive its qualitative changes. When we don't hear it, there are neither qualities nor changes. Music is perceived as it exists, and it exists as it is perceived.

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Although our focus is on the practical effects of qualities, their perception addresses the question, “What is existence?” Could a society ensconced in the belief that an objective view of the world is all that is necessary, bring itself to consider the alternative—that existence because it is changing is what it is as it is perceived?

Personal consciousness is something none of us can do without. But is it possible to be conscious of what is out there without being conscious of ourselves? A careful consideration of the question tells us that consciousness requires an awareness of both ourselves and of something other than ourselves. We, consciously aware of ourselves as perceivers, are consciously aware of qualities as we perceive them. The one is what it is in relation to the other. Existence consists of the two in relation to each other.

Some cultural beliefs to the contrary there is no such thing as a “pound of matter” or a “gallon of energy.” While cheese is sold by the pound and gasoline by the gallon, “matter” and “energy” are neither bought nor sold because there’s no container to put them in. No one has been able to determine exactly where “matter” exists or discover where “energy” is located. Although they are said to exist everywhere, their whereabouts are unknown. George Berkeley could have been referring to them when he spoke of the “absolute existence of unthinking things” had he been speaking in 1910 rather than 1710. Matter and energy are of course unthinking things, and “unthinking” is an apt description of something the existence of which, rather than perceived in relation to other things, is believed to be absolute.

Paired Entities

Sometimes authors refer to pairings as entities rather than qualities. In the first quotation cited below the author refers to the nouns *righteousness* versus *wickedness* rather than to the adjectives *righteous* versus *wicked*. In the second quotation the author refers to the nouns *spirit* versus *matter* rather than to the adjectives *immate-*

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rial versus *material*. Whether the members of a pair are referred to in their noun or adjectival form, the context indicates they are paired rather than separate.

The *Book of Mormon* was published by Joseph Smith in 1830 in the “Burned-over district” of upstate New York. Although the text is for the most part directed toward religious subjects, the following excerpt describes with considerable clarity the pairings of the entities cited.

...for it must needs be, there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass; neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery; neither good or bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body, it must needs remain as dead, having no life, neither death nor corruption, nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense or insensibility (Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, Palmyra, New York, 1830, pp. 62 and 63).

In the 1830s Ralph Waldo Emerson, active in the Boston Massachusetts area, wrote a series of essays. The first series was published in 1841. It included the essay entitled “Compensation.” In it is found the following statement:

An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as, spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay (*The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, The Modern Library, 1992, p. 156).

The Book of Mormon statement indicates that opposition or difference is necessary to distinguish one member of a pair from the other. Because qualities exist as they are perceived, to be different the perception of both members of a pair is necessary. The perception of one member of a pair is contingent on the perception of the other. Accordingly, the existence of “righteousness” is contingent on

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the existence of “wickedness” and vice versa. The difference between paired qualities is not resolvable. If it were resolved the two qualities would no longer be in opposition to each other and could no longer be perceptible or as the passage indicates could not be “brought to pass.”

According to the Emerson passage because one quality is only one half of a pair, the other half is necessary to make the pair complete. Implied is that for one member of a pair to be perceived the other must be perceived in relation to it. Thus, for humanity to be perceptible the perception of the qualities *masculine* (men) versus *feminine* (women) in relation to each other is necessary.

That the Joseph Smith and Emerson passages are similar goes without saying. We can only speculate as to the influence these authors may have had on each other or whether either author was aware of the other’s writings. Both passages suggest a distinction between relative and absolute existence. Cultural beliefs founded on absolute existents are problematic because while we are able to perceive paired existents in relation to each other, absolute existents that are ideas conceived in the mind are separate and as such are not perceptible.

The cited Book of Mormon passage is followed by an extended discussion concerning the “fall” of Adam. The text indicates that Adam’s “sin” was necessary and that had it not occurred the human race would not have existed. The argument is based on the statement that “wickedness” is a necessary partner of “righteousness.” The “fall” of man and woman is in contrast to the rise of humanity. The discussion ends with the famous couplet,

Adam fell that man might be;
Men are that they might have Joy.

A setting of this text appears in the finale of my *Symphony No. 2*.

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Perceptible versus Imperceptible

The qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are perceived in relation to each other as a pair. Separately they are not perceptible. We perceive the quality *material* with our senses. The quality *immaterial* is not perceptible to the senses. Our capacity to perceive features four varieties of perception: of the senses, of the emotions, of the volition, and of the intellect. We perceive the qualities *large* versus *small* with our senses. They characterize material entities. The qualities *happy* versus *sad* result from our emotions, the qualities *determined* versus *hesitant* from our volition, and the qualities *same* versus *different* from our intellect. These qualities characterize immaterial entities.

Our awareness of the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* is the result of a combination of sensory perception and the judgment of our intellect. With our senses we perceive the quality *material*. With our intellect we make a judgment concerning the extent to which the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are characterized by the qualities *same* versus *different*. We judge the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* to be the same because they are members of the same pair. We judge them to be different because one is perceptible to the senses while the other is not.

An entity characterized by the quality *material* is also characterized by the qualities *changing*, *temporal*, and *spatial*. These qualities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
A material entity is
changing
temporal
spatial

An entity characterized by the quality *immaterial* is also characterized by the qualities *constant*, *timeless*, and *non-spatial*. These qualities are listed in Table 2.

Table 2
An immaterial entity is
constant
timeless
non-spatial

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The qualities listed in Tables 1 and 2 are paired. These pairings together with the paired qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are listed in Table 3.

Table 3
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<i>material</i>	versus	<i>immaterial</i>
<i>changing</i>	versus	<i>constant</i>
<i>temporal</i>	versus	<i>timeless</i>
<i>spatial</i>	versus	<i>non-spatial</i>

The qualities listed in the lefthand column of Table 3 are perceived in relation to the qualities listed in the righthand column. As the quality *material* is perceived in relation to the quality *immaterial*, the quality *changing* is perceived in relation to the quality *constant*, the quality *temporal* is perceived in relation to the quality *timeless*, and the quality *spatial* is perceived in relation to the quality *non-spatial*. Qualities perceived in relation to each other are paired.

This is the case because the quality *material* is perceived in contrast to the quality *immaterial*. Separately it isn't contrasting and therefore it isn't perceptible. The quality *material* contrasts with the quality *immaterial* when the two qualities are paired because the quality *material* is perceptible while the quality *immaterial* is imperceptible. Accordingly, the quality *material* is characterized by the quality *perceptible* while the quality *immaterial* is characterized by the quality *imperceptible*. This is the case when the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are perceived in relation to each other. Separately neither the quality *material* nor the quality *immaterial* is perceptible.

When the qualities "material" and "immaterial" are conceived rather than perceived, they are ideas that exist separately from each

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other. As such, the conceived idea of the quality “material” and the conceived idea of the quality “immaterial,” are two separate qualities. They are not perceptible. They are two absolute qualities that are separate rather than two relative qualities that are paired.

The paired qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are relative to each other. As relative they are characterized by the qualities *same* versus *different* and as such are contraries. The separately conceived qualities “material” and “immaterial” are absolutely separate from each other. As separate they are characterized by the conceived quality “different” and as such are opposites. When two qualities are contraries they are contrasting. When two qualities are opposites they are contradictory. Two relative qualities that are perceived are paired because each quality is perceived as it contrasts with the other. Two absolute qualities that are conceived are separate because when one quality is the opposite of the other both cannot be considered simultaneously. Consequently, although an entity may be characterized by the perceived qualities *material* versus *immaterial* because they are contraries, it cannot be characterized by the conceived qualities “material” and “immaterial” because they are contradictory.

The perceived qualities *material* versus *immaterial*, *changing* versus *constant*, *temporal* versus *timeless*, and *spatial* versus *non-spatial* are relative. The conceived qualities “material” and “immaterial,” “changing” and “constant,” “temporal” and “timeless,” and “spatial” and “non-spatial” are absolute. Relative qualities are perceived in relation to each other. Absolute qualities are conceived separately from each other. As relative, existence is perceived as it is characterized by the paired qualities *material* versus *immaterial*. As absolute, existence is believed to be characterized by either the quality “material” or the quality “immaterial,” one or the other but not both.

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Because perception is of qualities that are paired, a material entity is perceived as changing only in relation to an immaterial entity that is perceived as constant. With our senses we perceive a changing body but are unable to perceive the constant entity that causes it to change. A body that is changing exists in time. It is temporal. That which causes it to change is constant. It is timeless. A body takes up space. It is spatial. That which causes a body to change doesn't take up space. It is non-spatial.

The qualities that characterize a material entity are paired with the qualities that characterize an immaterial entity. The qualities that characterize a material entity are perceptible to the senses. The qualities that characterize an immaterial entity are imperceptible to the senses. Accordingly, the qualities *perceptible* versus *imperceptible* are paired. They are perceived in relation to each other.

Over the past several thousand years we humans have considered the qualities “perceptible” and “imperceptible” to be separately conceived ideas, and as such, we believe that entities characterized by them are either perceptible or imperceptible, one or the other, but not both. When asked how we confirm the existence of an entity we refer to its perceptibility. Following the Scientific Revolution that began in the 16th century, the belief began to take hold that claims concerning the existence of imperceptible entities are spurious. The belief was in accord with the view that the conceived ideas of the qualities “perceptible” and “imperceptible” are contradictory and because immaterial entities are not perceptible to the senses, only entities perceptible to the senses exist.

The material body is perceptible to the senses but the capacity to perceive qualities is not. While our sensory organs are necessary to facilitate perception, they alone are not sufficient to complete the process. The capacity to perceive qualities of the senses, of emotion, of volition, and of the intellect is immaterial. Because a material entity is perceptible while an immaterial entity is imper-

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ceptible, for the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* to be perceptible they must be perceived in relation to each other. For that to be possible the qualities *perceptible* versus *imperceptible* must also be perceived in relation to each other.

The Person

The person consists of a material body and an immaterial self. A person's body exists "out there." A person's self exists "in here." The interaction of the body's sensory organs with the self's capacity to perceive results in the perception of sensory qualities. The interaction of the material brain and the immaterial mind enables the conception of ideas. Other bodily functions join with the self's capacity to perceive qualities of emotion, volition, and the intellect.

Although the existence of paired qualities is obvious once we become aware of them, we nonetheless believe the world exists without being perceived and that the conceived qualities "material" and "immaterial," and "perceptible" and "imperceptible" are absolute. We believe that perceptible things exist while things that are not perceptible do not exist. We believe live people exist because they are perceptible but question the existence of dead people because they are not perceptible. We believe live people are perceptible because their bodies are material while dead people are not perceptible because their existence (or lack of it) is immaterial. We believe life is temporary because live people die. We believe death is permanent because we know of no one who has died that has come back to life. Generally speaking, we associate existence with the conceived qualities "material" and "perceptible" while associating nonexistence with the conceived qualities "immaterial" and "imperceptible."

The qualities *material* versus *immaterial* and *perceptible* versus *imperceptible* are perceived in paired relationships. Because these qualities are paired, they cannot be perceived separately. The entities they characterize likewise can't be perceived separately be-

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cause are also paired. The body is characterized by the qualities *material* and *perceptible*, while the self is characterized by the qualities *immaterial* and *imperceptible*. When the body and the self are paired they constitute a person. The body characterized by the qualities *material* and *perceptible* is also characterized by the qualities *changing*, *temporal*, and *spatial*. The self, characterized by the qualities *immaterial* and *imperceptible*, is also characterized by the qualities *constant*, *timeless*, and *non-spatial*. The body is perceived in relation to the self. The two together constitute the person. The body and the self are respectively characterized by the qualities listed in Table 4.

Table 4
The Person

the body		the self
<i>material</i>	versus	<i>immaterial</i>
<i>perceptible</i>	versus	<i>Imperceptible</i>
<i>changing</i>	versus	<i>constant</i>
<i>temporal</i>	versus	<i>timeless</i>
<i>spatial</i>	versus	<i>non-spatial</i>

The qualities that characterize the body are paired with the qualities that characterize the self. The body is characterized by the quality *material* as the self is characterized by the quality *immaterial*. When the body is characterized by the quality *changing*, the self is characterized by the quality *constant*, and so on. The reverse is also the case. When the body is not characterized by the quality *material*, the self is not characterized by the quality *immaterial*.

A common belief is that when a person dies the person's spirit (soul) separates from the person's body. The belief assumes that a person's body dies while the person's spirit continues to live. For that to be possible the body and the spirit would have to be absolute entities capable of separate existence. Nonetheless, before the body dies the body and spirit are believed to exist jointly. Only after the body dies, does the spirit continue as a separately existing

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entity. How the spirit could exist jointly with the body when the body is alive but separately from the body when the body is dead is a question left unaddressed.

The question is avoided when we consider the pairings of the qualities that respectively characterize the body and the self. As stated, the body is perceived as material only when the self is perceived as immaterial. The body is perceived as changing only as the self is perceived as constant, and so on. While a person is alive the qualities that characterize the person's body and self are perceived as they are paired. When a person's body dies, the body and the self do not separate. Instead, by means of the normal process of sexual conception and reproduction a new body is provided to replace the old one. This body is "united" with the self in preparation for the birth of a new person. The new person is a combination of a self that is constant and a body that is changing.

Existing at a particular time and place, the new body is characterized by the qualities *temporal* and *spatial*. These qualities are paired with the qualities *timeless* and *non-spatial* that characterize the self. Although the new body is subject to time and space, the self is not. Accordingly neither time nor place play a role as the self "chooses" the new body with which it is paired. As paired the body and the self and their respective qualities are perceived in relation to each other.

Just as we don't know how our body and self are presently "connected," neither have we any knowledge of how a new body and a self are "united." Because the self is characterized by the qualities *timeless* and *non-spatial*, it is available to "unite" with a new body at any time or any place. The reproductive process and the formation of a new person could occur on any planet where life is sustained. Wherever it occurs the body is characterized by the quality *changing* while the self is characterized by the quality *constant*.

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With the birth of a new person comes the continued sense of personhood. When a body dies a person's memory is erased. When the self "unites" with a new body, the slate that contains previous remembrances has been wiped clean. At birth, though we have no awareness of a prior existence, we nonetheless retain a sense of self-identification. We refer to it as the "sense of self."

Dominant throughout human history is the belief that we humans are subject to a higher power. The belief rests on the assumption that though our existence is temporary, the existence of a higher power is permanent. Mortal existence is temporal. It begins at birth and ends at death. According to our forebears the governing power we are subject to provides for our immortality by continuing our existence in an afterlife.

These beliefs, however, ignore the effects of the quality *changing*. Life consists of a series of events that occur over a period of time. The length of an event consists of the amount of time it takes to occur. A person's life consists of a series of events. As the events of a person's life occur the person's body changes. As the result of change a person that is young will over a period of time become old. An aging body eventually dies. Thus, because life requires change and because change leads to death, the necessary cause of death is life!

Although the qualities *alive* versus *dead* are paired, believers attribute death to a human fault or failing. They claim that death is a penalty imposed on all mankind as a means of atoning for human error. The claim, however, ignores the effects of change that lead to aging and death as it also ignores the pairing of the qualities *alive* versus *dead*.

Believers, while acknowledging the existence of a person's body, do not acknowledge the existence of a person's self. Just as believers fail to acknowledge the effects of the quality *changing* that

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characterize the body, so too do they ignore the effects of the quality *constant* that characterizes the self. Because a person's body, because it begins and ends, is characterized by the quality *mortal*, a person's self, because it neither begins nor ends, it is characterized by the quality *immortal*.

The present generation is in the process of "passing away." Were there not a means of revitalization the human race would become extinct. Reproduction keeps it going but doesn't just rejuvenate the race, it turns the old into the new. This happens when an old person becomes unconscious, and the old body dies. The self serves as the bridge that spans the gap between an old and a new person. The immaterial self becomes "unattached" from the old body as it "attaches" itself to a new one. An embryo develops into a new person. The new person becomes conscious at birth. Although the person is new, it is nonetheless a continuation of what was old, serving as a link that connects the past with the future.